



Old Things



168 9 20

Chapter 1 by Mariana

“Oh, look! Can I go in there?”

Aunt Maude had barely glanced at the dimly lit junk shop in question before Amelia was bounding off in its direction.

She loved old things, and this shop was full of them. They were worn and forgotten, full of history and secrets. Amelia slowed to a walk as she crossed the threshold, her eyes adjusting to the dim interior as she wandered the maze of clutter. Books were crammed carelessly on shelves, and several old hats perched precariously atop a dusty armoire. There was a bin full of old porcelain dolls, most of them chipped or cracked, and a tall mirror leaned sadly against a wall, its gilded frame covered in a thin layer of dust. Almost reverently, Amelia ran her hands along the bookshelf, her fingertips tripping delicately over the cracked leather bindings.

“You break it, you buy it, girl,” barked a hoarse voice. “I don’t like children in my shop. Nasty little creatures. Always breaking things. Dirty, too.”

The voice belonged to a balding old man with beady eyes and a crooked beak of a nose. He shuffled out from behind the dusty counter piled high with trinkets and baubles, doing his best to appear menacing. A lesser child would have fled, but Amelia held her ground, stubborn defiance burning in her brown eyes. Slowly, her hands fell to her sides, and her fingers curling into angry fists.

“I never break things. And I’m not dirty.” Her voice quivered with childish rage. Why was it that

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"Pah!" The sound ripped through the silence, startling Amelia. It was the old man! And he was laughing! Wheezy chuckles shook the old man's shoulders, so much so that Amelia feared he would break.

"What are you doing here anyway? Surely you'd rather go visit the joke shop or the candy store? What do you want with a bunch of old junk?" The old man looked curiously at Amelia, his gaze boring into her until she looked away uncomfortably.

"It's...it's not junk," she finally said, her eyes lingering on a beautiful astronomical model made of brass. "Old things...they were loved once, weren't they? And then they were just left. And...and that's beautiful. And sad. Beautifully sad. Or sadly beautiful. I'm not sure which..." Her voice trailed off dreamily, and the old man found that he was starting to like this plucky Scottish girl, defender of junk and things once loved.

"Is that so?" he said gruffly. "Well, you look like a nice girl. Off to school soon, I suppose?"

But Amelia wasn't listening. She was staring thoughtfully at the concentric brass rings of the model, pondering whether it was beautifully sad or sadly beautiful or both or neither or...

"I'll tell you what," wheezed the old shopkeeper as he grabbed the delicate astronomical model from its spot on a dusty shelf. "Why don't you take it with you? I hear it belonged to a girl who dreamed of visiting the stars."

Chapter 2 by sarahmccall



Amelia thanked the old man profusely, all insult forgotten, and took the model as gently as she possibly could. Aunt Maude only shook her head in amusement as her niece returned to the street, still staring in awe at her new treasure. Amelia set it on the safest, most important shelf in her room as soon as she got home, but that night she couldn't help herself from taking it back down at looking at it, made new and strange by the moonlight. She spun the tiny planets gently, watching them orbit the brass sun. Around and around, over and over, until she lost track of many times they'd gone about, or how long she'd been watching, but she kept spinning it, like an automaton herself.

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As she did, her mind wandered, thinking of the old man, the wheezy chuckles, the girl who dreamed of visiting the stars. What was she like? The sun gleamed in a passing moonbeam. And did she to Mars in passing. What was she like? The sun gleamed in a passing moonbeam. And did she

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ever make it to the stars? There was a song now, flowing in time to the movement of the planets, hummed just softly, just enough to hear. But Amelia realized she was not humming. She stopped spinning the model, and looked up, startled, to find she was no longer in her room. This room was much smaller, just an attic really, with wooden rafters and plaster walls, and a messy bed with a faded quilt, which was where Amelia was sitting. Across the small space, there was a window, where a girl knelt, a notebook on her lap and her eye pressed to a telescope. It was her that was humming.

Chapter 3 by Issa alSaleh



Amelia froze. The model slowly came to a halt. The girl still sat, peacefully humming, staring through the telescope. Other children would, perhaps, have run screaming, but this was Amelia, bravest of the brave. She hoped. She swallowed, praying that her voice would sound normal. "Erm-" she began uncertainly. It dawned on her that she was, in a way, an intruder. She had never seen this girl before, and it certainly wasn't Amelia's room. It took her a moment to realise that the girl was no longer looking through the telescope, but was, in fact staring at her. "I..." the words died in Amelia's mouth. What was wrong with her? She was having trouble speaking. Amelia studied the girl opposite her. She was not exactly beautiful, with mousy brown hair and a light sprinkling of freckles across her nose, but her face was...friendly. Her wide brown eyes continued to study Amelia intently. The silence had gone on too long, and she knew, just knew that she would be annoyed with herself later if she didn't speak first. "I'm Amelia," she said simply, sticking out her hand. The girl visibly relaxed, perhaps realising that Amelia wasn't all that threatening. Hesitantly, she took Amelia's hand and shook it. Despite her reluctance, her grip was firm. "A pleasure to meet you." she replied, her tone guarded. She did not bother to mention her name. Amelia wiped her sweaty hands on her jeans. She cleared her throat...

Chapter 4 by SaintSayaka



"You must be Jean's daughter," the girl interrupted, beaming.

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"You know, Priestess Jean! She was talking in town today about how you were going to be the next in line for the White Dove sisters."

This was all going over her head. "I'm sorry, but I am not a bird."

The girl laughed brightly. The beauty of it made up for her lack of presence. "You can't lie to me, silly! Your hair is as white as feathers! And nobody other than a White Dove could have that."

White? No, no, Amelia's hair was quite red, she was sure of that. But when she brought a lock to her face, it seemed that her new friend was right - white it was, almost like the dust on the junk shop's mirror.

"Oh, but you must stay for dinner! Mother's been quite lonely lately with just the two of us."

The girl had quite a knack for shaking Amelia out of her thoughts. She had been told to be quite cautious around strangers, but in this instance, it didn't seem like she had much of a choice but to bend the rules a bit.

"Why not?"

"Oh, excellent! I must run and tell her!" And without so much as a goodbye or an invitation, the girl bolted down the stairs. Amelia found herself quite alone in the room, but for what appeared to be a cage home to three guinea pigs. She smiled. Finally, a familiar sight. She used to have three as well, that lived peacefully in her backyard and nibbled patches of grass dry in the pleasure of their own home. Her mother had always refused to tell her the truth of the matter, but one fateful day, the creatures simply disappeared. She drew closer to the cage, expecting the animals to run into their huts - Amelia was a clever girl who knew that creatures of their nature were not friendly among strangers for the sake of their survival. She figured that she could take a lesson from the pigs.

How strange. They appeared to be almost identical to her previous brood. The patches were in the right places, at least - the colors were a tad off in ways that only a girl as observant as

Amelia could notice. Curious and curiouser.

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And as if on cue, the girl came back.

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Chapter 5 by Windlion



"Amehlah, welcome to our house! What a surprise to have Jean's daughter visit!"

The voice of the woman who greeted Amelia when she descended from the attic was of the nature that instantly put everyone at ease, assured that they had arrived at a safe place and were welcome. Her tall and lithe form, sparkling green eyes, and strangely silver hair were fascinating, as was the embroidered mountain-blue gown she wore and the wide jeweled collar that covered her shoulders.

"I -- thank you for welcoming me, m'am -- my lady -- I am sorry I arrived so -- accidentally?" Amelia replied.

"Through the use of the orrery, yes," the woman replied -- then seeing Amelia's confused look, suddenly smiled. "Oh! This was the first time you have ever traveled through it, yes?"

"Yes, and I am a little upset that the man who gave it to me as a gift did not warn me!"

"Ah, old Kander, no doubt! Thinking of it only a trick played on a child -- shame on him! But be at peace, Ah -- how is your name said again, dear?"

"Ah mee lee yah, but please don't worry --"

"Ah. Mee. Lee. Yah. Very unusual, and a pretty name! Please call me Marguerite, and I need no title such as Lady or Madam. I am also one of the Seven Sisters, just as you are." She swept her gown to the side as she curtsied, and Amelia did her best to imitate the gesture of respect. Sister?

"But you must be famished, dear Sister. May I offer you a place at our humble table?"

Sister. I have no sister, thought Amelia.

Well, perhaps now I do.

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Windlion

a month ago

Two more chapters to go on Mariana's story, and then we can submit this tale of the seven White Doves for publication as a finished story! Conflicts to resolve --

What are the Sisters doing, and what do they expect of Amelia?
Will Amelia return to Aunt Maude's world?

I see this as a great starter for a series of tales tied together by the orrery, a new SW Universe of shared characters. Anyone else interested?



NotAnAssassin

14 days ago

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